



Putting Best Practices

Into Action:

A Manual for Youth Advisory Committee Members

Between 1988 and 1997, 86 endowed youth funds were created by community foundations throughout Michigan as a result of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Youth Challenge to the Council of Michigan Foundations. Each community foundation agreed to creating a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) as a permanent advisory committee of the community foundation with the primary responsibility of making funding recommendations for grants from the community foundation's endowed Youth Fund.

In addition, the Kellogg Foundation supported three other main goals for the YAC:

- To assess needs, assets, and priorities for area youth,
- To promote youth volunteerism and youth leadership,
- To increase the size of the Youth Fund through fund development activities.

Best Practices are operational standards for Community Foundation Youth Advisory Committees updated in 2007 by the Michigan Community Foundations Youth Project (MCFYP) Committee.

This **YACer Best Practices Manual** is intended to provide YAC members with specific guidelines they can use to work toward being the best YAC member they can be. It is not expected that each YAC member will meet all 12 of these Best Practices, but the more YACer Best Practices a YAC member meets, the better their YAC experience will be.

This manual should be used as a supplement to **YAC Best Practices**, **YAC Best Practices Manual** and "**Track Our YAC: A Tool for Assessing Our YAC's Progress Towards Best Practices**," an assessment tool for YAC members and Advisors to identify specific areas in which the YAC can improve.

Best Practice 1: Meeting Participation

Attends, is prepared for, and actively participates in all meetings.

Explanation:

Everyone's voice needs to be heard in order to reach an accurate consensus of the committee.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Be on time and ready to go when the meeting starts.

2. Attend all meetings so that you do not fall behind on current information and events.
3. Bring a planner or calendar to coordinate upcoming meetings and events.
4. Read all necessary material prior to the meeting.

Best Practice 2: Networking

Knows the names and schools of fellow YACers and makes an effort to get to know them.

Explanation: To work effectively as a team you must be comfortable with the other people in your group and be open to their perspectives.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Come to meetings prepared to make new friends that you might not ordinarily meet.

2. Make a concerted effort to know who the other YAC members are, where they are from, and their interests.
3. Be aware of factors that may influence other YAC members' opinions and ideas.
4. Be flexible and try sitting next to somebody different at each meeting.

Best Practice 3: Leadership

Is aware of officer and committee positions available and their responsibilities.

Explanation: Most YACs have officers who are responsible for running meetings, organizing events, and leading sub-committees. Regardless of whether you hold an officer position or not, it is important to know their responsibilities.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Serve on at least one sub-committee, such as: public relations, community service, recruitment, or fund development.
2. Ask current officers what it means to be in their position.
3. Consider applying to be a YAC officer, which may include: chair, vice chair, secretary or treasurer.

Best Practice 4: Public Relations

Understands the function of the YAC and actively informs others in the community about the YAC.

Explanation: You need to know what the YAC is, what it does, and how it originated. Sharing this knowledge with others will not only help promote awareness of the YAC in your community, but will also give you a better understanding of what you're involved in. YACers are not meant to be kept quiet and should be seen as leaders in the community.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Prepare a one-minute speech or explanation on what the YAC is and what it does for the community.
2. Tell others in your community and school about the benefits of YAC, whether it be for recruitment, fund development, or community outreach to potential grant applicants.
3. At a minimum, your family and friends should know what your YAC is and what it does.

Best Practice 5: Needs Assessment

Is aware of the needs in the community through needs assessments and personal observations.

Explanation: It is your responsibility to be the best grantmaker you can be and a large part of this is making sure you are aware of what the needs in the community are so that you can fund programs effectively.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Know the needs your YAC identified through its needs assessment and be able to identify what the top needs are.
2. Keep your eyes open to issues at school and in the community that your YAC could address through grants or community service projects.
3. Share your thoughts on the issues facing your community with others to gather feedback and opinions.

Best Practice 6: Grantmaking

Takes an active role in all aspects of the grantmaking process.

Explanation: Grantmaking is a very complex process and the only way to learn it is to take part in it.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Know the importance of each step in the grantmaking

process, including request for proposals, grant review, grant decisions, and evaluation.

2. Understand the different parts of the grant application.
3. Use various types of grants in your grantmaking, including project support, start-up, matching, and multi-year grants.

Best Practice 7: Volunteering and Service

Volunteers for community service projects and other YAC activities.

Explanation: The best YACers are deeply involved in their community, devote time and talent to service projects around the community and participate in all YAC activities. This involvement in the YAC and the community will give you a better understanding and a stronger connection to your community.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Participate in community service projects sponsored by your YAC and seek out opportunities to serve with other organizations in the community.
2. Be present anytime your YAC meets whether it is for a project, a social activity, or other event so you can make friends and establish connections to your community.
3. Volunteer to plan YAC projects and community service events in your community.

Best Practice 8: Fund Development

Learns about the importance of fund development and works to grow the YAC's endowment.

Explanation: The money YACs grant out comes from the YAC's endowment fund. The larger the endowment, the more money your YAC will be able to give out.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Know the difference between fund development and fundraising.

2. Know what an endowment is and how it works.
3. Each year, solicit five new donations to YAC fund.
4. Contribute to the YAC fund yourself, no matter how large or small your donation is.
5. Accompany a board member on a donor visit.

Best Practice 9: Role in Society

Knows the roles of philanthropy and foundations in society.

Explanation: It is important to have an understanding of the bigger picture of philanthropy and foundations to better grasp the scope of the work that your YAC is doing.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Know the definition of philanthropy (the giving of time, talent, and treasure).

2. Understand that there are foundations all around the world working towards the same goals you are. Be able to name some of the larger foundations in your community, state and county.
3. Make sure you know who your allies are in the community and who you could collaborate with on projects.

Best Practice 10: Role in the Community

Understands the foundation's role in the community and looks for ways the YAC can help.

Explanation: Community foundations contribute to their communities through grantmaking, community leadership, and donor services. YACers should participate in all three of these activities.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Know your foundation's mission statement.
2. Understand and be able to identify how your foundation is a leader in the community.

Best Practice 11: Staff and Board Members

Is acquainted with the foundation's staff and board members.

Explanation: The YAC is a part of your foundation, so it is important to know who works there and who to go to with questions. You should feel comfortable with the board and the staff.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Attend a board meeting at your foundation to present what the YAC is doing or if you have a youth on the board make sure that they are informing the foundation of what the YAC is doing.

2. Getting staff members and board members to come to your meetings is a great way to get the YAC more attention.
3. The foundation board ultimately gives final approval on whether or not the grants you choose are funded, so make sure you know your board members and the staff at your foundation.
4. Establish connections with board members and staffers because they can be great resources for recommendations in the future.

Best Practice 12: Conferences and Trainings

Participates in the Youth Grantmakers Summer Leadership Conference and Regional Trainings.

Explanation: The Summer Conference and Regional Trainings are designed to keep YACs connected and reinforce good grantmaking practices.

Recommendations for YACers:

1. Attend at least one Summer Conference during your time

- on YAC.
2. Summer Conference and Regional Trainings are good ways to meet other youth philanthropists, make new friends and learn about philanthropy.
3. Stay in touch with other YACs so you can learn about new grantmaking and volunteering opportunities.



For more information, contact CMF at 616.842.7080 / 313.566.2444
or visit www.michiganfoundations.org/youth